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Legislative Document

No. 1188

S.P. 363

In Senate, March 22, 2011

An Act To Achieve Maine's High School Graduation Goal

(EMERGENCY)

Reference to the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs suggested and ordered printed.

Joseph G. Carleton Jr.

JOSEPH G. CARLETON, JR.
Secretary of the Senate

Presented by President RAYE of Washington.
Cosponsored by Representative CAIN of Orono and
Senators: ALFOND of Cumberland, COURTNEY of York, MARTIN of Kennebec,
Representatives: CURTIS of Madison, CUSHING of Hampden.

1 **Emergency preamble. Whereas,** acts and resolves of the Legislature do not
2 become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

3 **Whereas,** 22% of Maine high school students do not complete high school in 4
4 years; and

5 **Whereas,** the State has recently established the goal of a 90% high school
6 completion rate by 2016; and

7 **Whereas,** in school year 2008-2009, 2,162 students dropped out of high school; and

8 **Whereas,** in school year 2008-2009, 7% of young people between the ages of 16
9 and 19 were not attending school and were not employed; and

10 **Whereas,** in school year 2008-2009, 1,446 girls and young women, between 10 and
11 19 years of age, gave birth; and

12 **Whereas,** Maine’s percentage of college graduates lags 7% behind the New
13 England average, thereby negatively affecting workforce readiness; and

14 **Whereas,** in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within
15 the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as
16 immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now,
17 therefore,

18 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

19 **Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA c. 228** is enacted to read:

20 **CHAPTER 228**

21 **AT-RISK STUDENT GRANT PROGRAM**

22 **§6971. Program established**

23 **1. Program established.** The At-risk Student Grant Program is established under
24 the administration of the commissioner as set out in this chapter.

25 **2. Definitions.** As used in this chapter, unless the context otherwise indicates, the
26 following terms have the following meanings.

27 A. "At-risk student" means an elementary student or secondary student who is at risk
28 of failing or dropping out of a regular public school program as determined in
29 accordance with criteria established in rules by the commissioner.

30 B. "Partner" means a Maine nonprofit corporation that provides services to at-risk
31 students and delivers those services pursuant to an agreement with a recipient as
32 described in that recipient's grant application.

33 C. "Recipient" means a school administrative unit that has been awarded a grant
34 under this chapter.

1 D. "Rural district" means a school administrative unit that qualifies as a rural district
2 under criteria in rules adopted by the commissioner.

3 **3. Grant-making authority.** The commissioner may award individual grants of not
4 more than \$500,000 each to one or more school administrative units to fund programs
5 designed specifically and intended exclusively for the support of at-risk students.
6 Programs that include services delivered by a partner are preferred, but school
7 administrative units may apply without having previously made an agreement with a
8 partner. Grants for programs that do not include a residential programming option may
9 not receive funding that exceeds 1 1/2 times the statewide average per-pupil expenditure.

10 **§6972. Program criteria**

11 **1. Requirements.** To qualify for a grant under this chapter, an application must
12 propose a program that meets the following requirements:

13 A. The program serves a school administrative unit or units having a high percentage
14 of dropouts or a lack of appropriate programs for at-risk students, or both;

15 B. The program identifies a process for quality control and outcome measures; and

16 C. The program enhances or advances efforts of a school administrative unit to
17 accomplish the goals set out in chapter 211, subchapter 1-B with respect to high
18 school graduation rates and suspension and expulsion policies.

19 **2. Selection.** The commissioner shall award a grant to a program that meets the
20 requirements of subsection 1 based on the degree to which it meets the following
21 additional criteria, taking into account the distribution of grants required by subsection 3:

22 A. The program includes personal learning plans;

23 B. The program includes a partner;

24 C. The program contains a strong plan for identifying and recruiting students into the
25 program;

26 D. The program focuses on youth who show interest in completing a high school
27 program;

28 E. The program includes an option for residential programming for those students
29 best served by that option;

30 F. The program makes available internship and apprenticeship opportunities;

31 G. The program reflects recommendations from local youth councils and the
32 advisory committee on truancy, dropouts and alternative education established
33 pursuant to section 5152;

34 H. The program is based on or provides for input from a local alternative program
35 and dropout prevention committee; and

36 I. The program includes plans for regional collaboration.

37 **3. Application process; distribution of awards.** The commissioner shall establish
38 reasonable deadlines each year for an initial application and award cycle, followed by a

1 supplemental award cycle if all funds available are not awarded in the initial cycle. The
2 commissioner shall make the application process as simple as possible and one that
3 encourages participation by and provides grants to a wide spectrum of eligible schools.
4 The commissioner shall reserve 40% of the funds determined to be available in each
5 initial application and award cycle for grants to rural districts. Any portion of the funds
6 reserved for rural districts but not awarded in the initial application and award cycle
7 because applications meeting the requirements do not qualify for the total reserved
8 amount may be awarded to any district during a supplemental award cycle.

9 **§6973. Available funds**

10 The commissioner may expend and disburse funds to carry out the purposes of this
11 chapter to the extent that the commissioner identifies existing resources that are available.
12 The commissioner may identify and expend for purposes of this chapter any portion of
13 the amount available for services to state agency clients that the commissioner determines
14 will exceed the reasonably projected amount required to support the expected number of
15 state agency clients in a school year. This expected number of clients must be determined
16 in consultation with the Department of Health and Human Services.

17 **§6974. Program review**

18 The commissioner must, on an annual basis, consult with an audit and review board
19 appointed by the commissioner and consisting of superintendents and members of local
20 youth councils to review the program.

21 **Emergency clause.** In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this
22 legislation takes effect when approved.

23 **SUMMARY**

24 This bill establishes the At-risk Student Grant Program, to be administered by the
25 Commissioner of Education, to improve the ability of school districts to reduce dropout
26 rates by creating programs, preferably with nonprofit partners, to provide services to at-
27 risk youth that may include an option for residential services and will further the State's
28 goal of increasing high school graduation rates. The program is funded from available
29 resources identified by the commissioner.